



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Republican Leader
Committee on Education and Labor Hearing:
"Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Corporation for National and
Community Service"
December 1, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

"We are here today because AmeriCorps, formerly known as the Corporation for National and Community Service, has failed yet another audit. After holding numerous oversight hearings on the fiscal state of AmeriCorps, it is time to admit that this is a failed experiment. AmeriCorps has been given years to get its act together but has failed to fix its systemic failures. How long are we going to ask taxpayers to prop up this broken agency?"

"AmeriCorps oversees the community service activities of more than eight different federal programs and initiatives, primarily by managing the distribution of grants. Yet AmeriCorps has proven repeatedly that it does not have the ability or the systems in place to do this effectively."

"This agency is entrusted with nearly a billion dollars of taxpayer funds every year. One of the most important duties of this Committee is to provide oversight over federal agencies like AmeriCorps. This work is even more critical when the agency

proves it cannot police itself.

“At every turn, and under multiple administrations, AmeriCorps has failed at its attempts at oversight, transparency, and reform. AmeriCorps’ own Office of Inspector General has issued numerous reports detailing the agency’s failure to fulfill its mission to safeguard the taxpayer funds entrusted to it. These reports have noted patterns of fraud, mismanagement, noncompliance, and safety hazards within AmeriCorps grantees.

“AmeriCorps has been plagued by poor management and weak financial oversight since it began in 1993. Despite repeated demands from Congress to improve its management and get its fiscal house in order, AmeriCorps has failed to deliver.

“We know AmeriCorps has failed at following the law for a long time. For example, from 2013 to 2015 members of an AmeriCorps youth workforce development program provided support services for three abortion clinics in New York City—contrary to federal law. Since this occurred, AmeriCorps has done little to increase confidence in its transparency and integrity.

“We also know that AmeriCorps participants have been caught doctoring hours worked, program administrators have failed to do background checks on some participants, and there have been data security issues. This record of failures cannot be swept under the rug or dismissed as insignificant.

“Further, AmeriCorps has not provided complete financial records to independent

auditors and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) since 2017. Congress cannot fulfill its Constitutional oversight function without accurate and up-to-date information.

“In its most recent audit, the independent auditor found nine material weaknesses and one significant deficiency in AmeriCorps’ internal control over financial reporting, of which the vast majority were identified in previous audits and remain unaddressed. In fact, following its 2019 audit, only ten of the 75 recommendations made to AmeriCorps have been implemented.

“This kind of habitual mismanagement is outrageous and at some juncture we need to point the finger at Congress for refusing to fix what is clearly broken. There must be accountability for AmeriCorps’ pattern of fraud, mismanagement, noncompliance, and overall inefficient use of taxpayer dollars. Until AmeriCorps makes fixing its financial management a priority, it should not be entrusted with tax dollars from the American people.

“AmeriCorps is expensive, unnecessary, and has a strong habit of draining taxpayers’ wallets. Every year, it presents the American people with fewer and fewer reasons to show it is worth the cost.

“Our country is known for its robust civil institutions. The U.S. is often ranked as the most generous country in the world when it comes to money donated and time given to charity. Americans don’t need federal bureaucrats telling them to do what they already naturally do. We also don’t need a federal program to do what

the private sector can accomplish at half the price.

“Despite AmeriCorps’ long-standing history of financial failure and mismanagement, House Democrats voted to hand this agency \$15 billion more in taxpayer funds through the so-called Build Back Better Act. If AmeriCorps can’t handle the responsibility of \$1 billion a year, how do we expect it to take care of \$15 billion responsibly? It is clear Democrats are going to continue to turn a blind eye to the fraud and mismanagement happening right under their noses and taxpayers will continue to be the ones forced to shoulder the burden.

“The last time AmeriCorps’ programs were reauthorized was in 2009 with the passage of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which was named in honor of the late Senator who was the author of the legislation that governs many of AmeriCorps’ programs. Yet, despite his support for national service, Senator Kennedy was not shy about his views regarding programs or agencies that fail to meet their intended goals. In debating the establishment of the Corporation on the Senate floor in 1993, he noted that “Congress will not, and should not, fund a program if it is unsuccessful.”

“Three decades later, the results could not be clearer. AmeriCorps has proven completely unable or unwilling to govern itself or the programs under its purview. We are reassured every time AmeriCorps representatives come before this Committee that they will implement reforms, but AmeriCorps has proven it is all talk and no action.

“During Senator Kennedy’s 1993 floor speech he stressed that he did not believe AmeriCorps would become unsuccessful, but he noted that if it did, he would favor cutting the program.” I agree with him. This is a failed agency that needs to be overhauled completely or just eliminated.”

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